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## **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, June 18, 2008

### **Rice man indicted on child pornography production charges**

A 32-year-old Rice man was charged this week in federal court with one count of production of child pornography. Michael Ray Tobiassen was indicted June 16 in Minneapolis.

Tobiassen's indictment alleges that on March 29, 2008, he did employ, use, persuade, induce, entice and coerce a minor to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depictions of such conduct.

If convicted, Tobiassen faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in prison. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Sherburne County Sheriff's Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys William J. Otteson and Erica H. MacDonald.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood (PSC), a national initiative that encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces to investigate and prosecute cases that involve the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet. PSC urges that law enforcement efforts be complemented by community-wide campaigns to assist victims of exploitation and to educate parents, other adults, and children about Internet safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 33 children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online each year. One in four children experiences unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material on the Internet each year. And, more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week. Moreover, recent research conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates a strong correlation between possessing or distributing child pornography and committing sexual-contact crimes against children.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.

